Q: So, I don’t know about from your point of view but if you remember when you first heard that there was going to be a referendum?

A: Well, at least two years in advance.

Q: Right.

A: But it was pretty obvious that there was going to be one the moment the election happened and the SNP got into power as the majority because then they could go ahead with their manifesto plans to hold a referendum. So, it was obvious it was going to happen, it was just a matter of when, and then there was this delay for two years. Everyone thought they were going to have it quite quickly but then they decided to have it in two years hence to try and gather support, I think.

Q: Right.

A: And of course the opposition parties complained about that because it was two years of debate and distraction from the real issues of Scottish politics.

Q: Oh, I see. So, Scottish Parliament is a distraction?

A: Yes, because it overwhelmed every other issue. Everything depended on the referendum, like the run up to a general election, all issues are plugged into that issue, that one issue, that one important thing right from the start, so a two year long campaign actually. So, I knew about it at least two years before.

Q: And what about all the debates about what was going to go on the ballot paper?

A: Oh, yes. Yes, that was exciting. ‘Do you want Scotland to be an independent country?’ Was that the wording, I can’t remember, ‘Do you want Scotland to be an independent country?’

Q: Was it, ‘Do you think that Scotland should be?’

A: ‘Should Scotland be an independent country?’ was the thing they arrived at eventually but the SNP had got an extra few words in which made it a more positive light, ‘Do you think Scotland should be’ or, ‘Would you like Scotland to be’. I can’t remember what it was but one or two words at the beginning which gave it a slightly more positive spin than that flat statement, ‘Should Scotland’.

Q: Right.

A: Or, ‘Do you agree’, ‘Do you agree that Scotland should be a’, yes, so that word agree was too positive because everyone, if you’re asked to agree to something, you usually say ‘yes’, so the opposition parties complained about that. The Electoral Commission decided in the end that yes, that word ‘agree’ was a little dangerous so they cut it out and it was a vote for, ‘Should Scotland be’, but that debate went on for about six months, and of course the Westminster parties all got involved in that and the Westminster government, I think at certain times, they wanted to form the question itself, not let Scottish Parliament form the question but they retracted that eventually along with the other retractions about voting age and spending and other things.

Q: Yes, yes.

A: And the date, yes, they gave away the date.

Q: I mean, do you think that that longer campaign did benefit the ‘Yes’ campaign?

A: Yes, because in my view, it was all about the bad handling of the economy by the Westminster government and the cuts. So, the longer the cuts went on, the more people became opposed to the Westminster system and therefore they voted for SNP, so yes, it was a successful tactic and it almost succeeded, almost won.

Q: Yes, very close, and what about the devo-max option on more power?

A: Yes, yes. How long did that debate last? Again, about another six months or something like that but yes, Alex Salmond did offer a second question. In a way, it was slightly rapscallions because he knew the opposition parties could not agree on what the second question should be precisely but on the other hand, it was tempting to them to have that second option because then everyone would get what they wanted in the end, which was more home rule for Scotland. The ironic thing is that, in the end, democracy has shone through because that’s what we’re going to get, even though we voted ‘No, we’re going to get much of the powers of devo-max. That’s not the full powers of devo-max but we’re going to get an awful lot of them, so in the end, the process has been bizarrely contrary but it has worked out as what the people wanted in the end.

Q: Do you think that those powers are significant enough? I mean, because there was a lot of concessions and discussions before the referendum on what extra powers might be offered.

A: Yes, they’re quite complex and can seem a bit hard to work out. You get all of income tax but you’re not allowed to set the starting rate.

Q: That’s right.

A: I think you’re allowed to set the thresholds within the starting rate but not the starting rate.

Q: Okay, so the base rate is still 20%, so it could come in later?

A: Yes, it could come in later. I think that’s right. It’s all rather complicated. That’s just on income tax and then there are these welfare powers which are still being negotiated now, and then there are other powers like aggregates tax and stamp duty and other things which are coming, all of which are quite complicated. So, in a way, I suppose that allows both parties to claim victory, doesn’t it, you know, that you could interpret them as massive powers or you could interpret them as minimal powers. Of course, they’re still arguing over whether it’s 20% of the spend in Scotland or whether it’s 40% or 60% or whatever. So, the answer to your question is, yes, we have achieved a lot of roll out as a result of this process, yes.

Q: As you were talking about during those negotiation process the opposition parties, you mean the opposition parties in Holyrood?

A: Yes. Yes, absolutely.

Q: So, kind of, Labour and the Lib Dems and a couple of Tories?

A: Yes, yes.

Q: So, how do you feel that Edinburgh, as a city, was kind of feeling in the run up to the referendum?

A: Well, I thought Edinburgh, you would imagine, would have been against it because there are so many English people here and were so lowland and were so anti-SNP until quite recently, but then what happened was that the poorer parts of the town began to debate, “Well, we want to escape from Westminster posterity and we also want to give Westminster a bloody nose because of what they’re doing to our welfare and our wages,” and all the other complaints that they have and so they joined a, sort of, popular campaign to raise the blue saltire and so if you walked through Craigmillar, for instance, during the referendum campaign, it was astonishing. Saltires were out everywhere. There was a great feeling of public participation and not quite anti-English feeling but certainly a strong Scottish, patriotic feeling, you know. So, I think the city did change quite a lot during the last nine months, I suppose, in the run up to it.

Q: But you think it was quite regional?

A: Within Edinburgh?

Q: Yes, regional variations.

A: Yes. Yes, because I mean as a campaigner during this campaign and, you know, if you stand on Morningside Road, you get a third of people who are SNP but quite quietly SNP and two thirds of people who are violently against independence and, you know, offer to take your hand and say “Well Done” and, “We mustn’t allow Salmond to separate us from the rest.” I thought it was very divisive actually.

Q: I mean, when you say it was divisive, were there very many people that changed their mind, do you think, or swing voters?

A: Well, there must’ve been. A lot of people changed their mind at the last minute, wasn’t there, to get that 45% result but I was campaigning about a year before and most people had made up their minds at that point but presuming there were a lot of people who did change their mind at the last minute, they say women changed their minds or hadn’t made up their minds until the last minute, and then a lot of them swung in behind ‘Yes’ because of austerity, I think.

Q: Did you talk to people who, when you were campaigning, who you felt could have been persuaded either way?

A: No, probably not, but on the other hand, they were persuaded, weren’t they? When you ask people, they had a definite view one way or the other all the way through that two year period, yes.

Q: Right.

A: It was hard to argue someone round, you just ended up annoying them, yes.

Q: Okay. What were the main issues that people were bringing up for or against, do you think?

A: Well, I suppose, the health service was one, certainly the SNP fighting people about the health service and I think that worked. I think people were worried. They were worried about-, this is people who wanted independence in the end because they thought that the Westminster government was destroying the health service down South and they would privatise it up here as well and they didn’t want that. What else frightened people about Westminster? More Tory rule, more austerity, I suppose. They’re frightened about the public services and I suppose they became less frightened about things like pensions and so on. They thought that in the end, that could be worked out some way or another and they kind of believed Alex Salmond’s assurances that these things can be worked out.

Q: So, do you think that those economic issues, I mean not just pensions but also-?

A: I think so, yes.

Q: That was a big deal for people?

A: I think, yes, it was. I think the economic issue was quite strong. Funnily enough, because everybody thought at the beginning of the campaign, it’s going to be decided on emotional issues, isn’t it, and Alex Salmond kept saying, “No, it’ll be about economics,” and in the end, I think he was right.

Q: Right.

A: Yes, until perhaps maybe the last week when Gordon Brown got up and started talking about British investment and he did worry people about pensions and about leaving a large economy, and then I think at the very last minute, say the last week, people thought back on the economy, but interesting, wasn’t it?

Q: Yes.

A: Which factors played against time, yes. There must be academics writing about all that now. I’d be interested to read that also.

Q: Do you think that speech by Gordon Brown was quite a watermark moment?

A: Yes, it was, yes, and I suppose the way the press handled it as well. They gave him a very positive spin and built him up or something. Alex Salmond says, you know, Gordon Brown did swing it quite a lot.

Q: Why do you feel he waited so long to get involved?

A: Yes, it’s puzzling. I’m not sure he knew entirely what he was doing, you know. I’d like to know what persuaded him to come out of hiding in the last week. I just don’t know.

Q: Do you think he was personally conflicted?

A: No.

Q: Okay.

A: I think this British thing got to him, certainly when he was Prime Minster, you know, the British link was important right through his years in office. I suppose, at the last minute, he must feel that he had to contribute to the campaign and then he got on the stomp and just gruel and gruel and gruel as you do in those roles, and then ended up manufacturing this vow, which has turned out to be quite successful.

Q: Yes, yes.

A: I was quite surprised but it did work, you know, and now it’s being delivered, yes.

Q: Yes, yes. How do you feel that the Labour party in general did out of the campaign against independence?

A: I think they messed it up completely, and so did the Liberal Democrats and the Tories. I think they misjudged the mood of Scotland right from the start, you know, by opposing the whole idea of the referendum that, “You can’t have a referendum. It’s going to be illegal,” they said to start with, “You can’t have young people voting,” “The question has to be vetoed by us,” and then they started coming up with, “You’ll lose every defence contract you’ve ever thought about,” “Your pensions will be in danger,” “The Scottish economy will be ruined,” “Your oil revenues are nothing like what you thought they were,” and all of these very negative things, I think were a disaster.

Q: Right.

A: Every time these ministers flew up from London, Alex Salmond gained each time from these warnings it was extraordinary.

Q: Was it like scaremongering, would you say?

A: Yes, it was scaremongering and I think until the last week, they completely misjudged that and I think they should have had a much more positive spin and said, “What can you gain out of being part of the union? We’re going to defend the health service and since the Second World War, you’ve built up this welfare state, the Beveridge state,” and so on, “It’s something that Britain should be proud of. Look at the Olympic Games which we staged and we helped to do the Commonwealth Games, it wasn’t just an Alex Salmond project.” All of those things, I think, should’ve been pushed much more and they failed to do it until the very last minute, you know.

Q: So, you’re saying that you don’t-, because you said earlier it didn’t feel like it was a very emotional decision in the end but it sounds like some of those things actually when they’re put like that become quite emotional, that they should be positive about something rather than being negative about something.

A: Yes, they were. It was emotional, except for that-, perhaps the one exception is people who got frightened about the economy at the last minute. So, do you remember there was that poll of 52% in favour of and that was a Sunday Times spectacular. That was a terrific finding, you know, what a piece of news, and that sparked Westminster to wake up and it also perhaps worried people, “Oh, this might actually happen now,” you know, “Are we sure about our pensions and leaving the larger economy?” and I think perhaps some people who were part of that 52% perhaps fell back in the end.

Q: Did you realise how many of them there actually were?

A: Yes, I wondered how many there were. I don’t know.

Q: Do you think the campaign has worked out, in terms of legacy and things like that, well for the SNP?

A: Yes, I do because they showed that they could get far more than their usual third of the vote. They nearly won and they got all these new members, community enthusiasm. They did reinvent the town hall meeting. I went to a couple of them and they were always full the ones I went to, even in my part of town which is quite a rural part of town. They seemed to do nothing wrong during the referendum and now you get to hear that they’ve redeveloped it, they’re riding really high polls, they’re getting almost devo-max, devo-plus anyway, and they’re able to argue it’s a step on the road to independence to put quite a positive spin on it all. Now, moving into this election, they’re way ahead of Labour. I know the gap’s closing but they’re still way ahead of Labour. They’ll do very well.

Q: I mean, to a certain extent, to an outsider that may seem surprising considering you could say that the SNP actually lost that referendum-,

A: Yes, I know.

Q: But it doesn’t seem to have affected confidence?

A: No, it doesn’t, yes, yes.

Q: Why do you think that is? Why do you think that Labour is feeling seemingly punished or less favoured?

A: Yes. It had clearly lost a lot of its original support to get to that 45%. Some people decided they’d had enough of Labour and Labour wasn’t the old Labour we used to know.

Q: Right.

A: And all these left winged policies had been ditched and they want to go back to that so they thought, “Let’s give Labour a bloody nose and let’s vote the SNP,” and they seem to have taken over that ground and I’m not sure they can win that back, you know.

Q: Right.

A: I just think they’ll be quite mature voters, I would guess, those who have decided to leave Labour and back the SNP. I’m not sure about that but I would guess that old style Labour voters who were just fed up with Labour-,

Q: Yes, the new Labour.

A: And therefore they won’t change their minds at the last minute.

Q: Right, right.

A: You see.

Q: Yes. I mean, what about the prospect of the Liberal Democrats coming into the general election?

A: Well, I think they’re dreadful myself. I’m a Liberal Democrat myself but I think they’re the people to vote for. First of all, they should never have gone in with the Tories in my view.

Q: Right.

A: That panic after the last general election, ten days of panic, and a lot of people in Scotland didn’t want it to happen but of course the party down south decided that it would go ahead with it, and then they reneged on their tuition fees thing which was dreadful. It didn’t affect us directly in Scotland but it affects us morally. It’s still on our doorsteps and that’s what people say, “Oh, you gave in on tuition fees. You went in with the Tories, you’re just we-Tories,” and I think that’s unforgiveable, and then also we went ahead with the austerity programme and that’s been devastating in Scotland. So, I think we’re in for a really great punishment and in my view, quite rightly. We just made the wrong decisions.

Q: Right.

A: I think the party’s got to take it on the chin this time and rebuild after the election, again as people begin to forget what we’ve done.

Q: I mean, is there a story that you have about what the Liberal Democrats were able to contribute as part of the coalition?

A: Yes, there is. I mean, there’s a hierarchy in there. The Liberal Democrats keep emphasising this, you know, that we raised the tax threshold, we got identity cards done away with, we put more money into schools in England and it’s up to the Scottish government to follow suit in Scotland and all the rest of it, and all of these achievements that actually in my view, they could’ve got the same if not more by remaining out of government, being in the Commons and linking up with the other parties to achieve these things. They could’ve voted with Labour over the schools programme. I think the Tories kind of came round to the idea of raising the tax threshold so it would’ve been a Tory idea which they could’ve supported in parliament so I think they would’ve won at least all of those things outside government as in it, and yet without being tarnished by joining it, the Tory government. I think it was a big mistake.

Q: Is it tempting for you at all to kind of switch allegiances?

A: To switch? Well, I’ve been in the party as a quiet member for about 25 years or something, more than 20 years anyway, an old Liberal actually 40 years ago was the Liberal Party before the Democrats came along, so I don’t think you should desert parties, you see.

Q: Okay.

A: I’m one of those people who believe that you should just stick with one party and argue within that party for what you want.

Q: Okay.

A: At a conference time or whenever there’s an election in sight, the priority vote for the candidate you want to try to get the policies that you want, and stay within one party throughout. It’s very tempting to leave the Liberal Democrats at this time when they’re going to crash, you know, and join the Greens probably in my case. Also, the Liberals have great long tradition which is hard to turn your back on, isn’t it, because your forefathers have been in it and they’ve had this fine tradition of home rule and all the rest of it, and probably a large established party just keeps rolling on. I’ve been to two conferences in the last few years and it’s astonishing how the conference seems unaffected by the ratings in the polls or by the disastrous results in the elections but the party just rolls on and on.

Q: Right, right.

A: The detailed policies are discussed, people bring out policy papers, elections and the bandwagon keeps rolling. It’s not a bandwagon. The machine keeps rolling forward. The tradition keeps rolling forward. It’s quite nice in a way, like a very big tanker at sea. You don’t want it to swing about too much, do you?

Q: No.

A: You want it to just cruise ahead and move sort of more left and right as the generations pass, you know.

Q: Like the winds.

A: Yes.

Q: Ties a little bit on the same course.

A: Yes, and if you can influence it slightly here and there then fine. You get to know people inside the parties, you know, you’d hate to feel you were letting them down.

Q: Yes.

A: So, yes, you stick with it through thick and thin unfortunately.

Q: So, on a slightly separate note, I mean, how important do you think, like individual leaders, the profile of individual leaders was in the independence? I mean, David Cameron but especially I guess Alex Salmond and-,

A: Yes. He was brilliant. I don’t think he made a mistake in the whole campaign. His strategy was excellent and then his presentation was excellent, and he’s always been able to give the Scottish people hope and I think that’s key to any election campaign to give people hope when things can be about austerity needn’t happen and all that, “Scotland can make it on its own.” I think he had a very positive message and he’s been brilliant at spelling it out. Nicola Sturgeon is equally brilliant and the rest of the party hung together. There was no division among them or anything, or disputes and so on, like getting the Labour party or even the Liberal democrats so, yes, they’ve been the leaders. So, Alex Salmond was strong. David Cameron, well I think he did misjudge it. He thought he could just ignore it and it would all go away and then gradually that panic at the last week, he really came up. I think that 52% in the Sunday Times shocked it for the week. They thought, “Goodness, I’m going to be presiding over a nation which is going to split. We’re going to lose a third of our nation under my premiership,” you know, “this is a disaster.” So, he was absolutely shocked and I think each visit he came north, it was a negative result. I think normal people did vote against him because he was seen as a posh boy who was pushing the interests of rich people in the South of England. Who else have we got? Ed Miliband.

Q: Darling?

A: Well, Darling. I’ve known Alistair Darling for a long time actually.

Q: Oh, right, okay.

A: He’s never changed. He did slightly when he was a left wing member of the Edinburgh Administration as a Counsellor but apart from those few exciting years in the 70’s or whatever it was, he’s remained very much Alistair Darling. He was on a campaign at the university he did get elected actually.

Q: Oh, right.

A: As I say, he hasn’t changed a bit apart from the colour of his hair. His eyebrows have remained the same colour.

Q: Yes, they have.

A: He’s a lovely man and he’s very competent and thoughtful and all the rest of it, but he does lack charisma and he admits that himself, I think. A friend of mine once said, “Politicians should be dull because that makes them responsible and they make the right decisions and so on,” and so he complies with that rule that politicians should be dull.

Q: Do you think that was deliberate that he was chosen to kind of be the face of the ‘No’ campaign in a way?

A: Yes, I think in a way looking back on it, that was probably the wrong decision. I think perhaps they did need someone who was more emotional and more charismatic and I think in a way, Jim Murphy has kind of got that role in his hundred city tour. What was it? A hundred day tour when he went round all the various towns and then he did galvanise the ‘No’ campaign quite a bit which Alistair Darling didn’t.

Q: That didn’t receive quite as much media attention as just the TV debates did, I suppose?

A: Yes. Well, the he did get-, the egg throwing incident really raised it, didn’t it, and it was lucky that he was struck by that egg because then it made everybody think, “Oh, well that’s a shame, they shouldn’t be doing that,” and so they kind of warmed to him after that, I thought. He took it very well, you know. He didn’t retreat into a café and so on, like some others have done before. In a way, he’s benefited from that and he’s the Labour leader.

Q: Yes.

A: As for the Lib Dems, well, I thought Michael Moore was very good and he was calm, quiet and a sensible rugby player type, you know, who could put across the ‘No’ campaign quite well and our need to be British and he was playing soft ball with Scotland which is, I think, the way to go. London made the wrong decision to replace him with Alistair Carmichael because they thought just because Michael Moore lost the debate with Nicola Sturgeon on television was no reason, I don’t think, to change him. Nicola Sturgeon made mincemeat of anybody.

Q: Yes.

A: Alistair come out as put in as the sort of hard man and I think that was just a role approach. I think that eliminated people actually, so I don’t think he came out of it very well.

Q: I mean, it sounds like a similar thing from the Labour party and the Lib Dems as basically that there’s been a leadership change in Scotland that’s kind of been pushed on them from Westminster. Is that fair to say?

A: Yes, it was in the Lib Dems case, I think so. I think most of the people in Scotland were quite happy with Michael Moore and then Alistair Carmichael was appointed, not in the Labour party. I think Ed Miliband, I don’t think he opposed Jim Murphy. I think Jim Murphy, kind of, emerged by himself as, in a way, the obvious leader, the next leader for Labour. Johann Lamont was awful during the campaign. I mean, she just faded into the background and for a woman especially that was dreadful because women had yet to make up their minds and Labour women could’ve been persuading much more either to stick with the Unionist party but she never really came out. I don’t know why. Margaret Curran, I thought she should’ve been Labour leader actually. I thought she was much more spirited and a more charismatic person but again, she didn’t play a bit role in the election, I don’t think, in the referendum, so I don’t know why that was.

Q: Yes.

A: Yes, so Labour let themselves down, I think, yes.

Q: Did you feel that the media coverage, at least locally in Scotland, was fairly balanced? Did it have-?

A: Yes, I suppose it was. I think perhaps they did give Salmond the edge actually.

Q: Okay.

A: I think so. The Herald and the Scotland on Sunday and so on certainly did and the record was always banging it way against him but I think the TV coverage was pretty sympathetic to Salmond.

Q: Oh, okay.

A: I thought so. They gave him a good run and I think they questioned the Westminster really quite a lot, both BBC and ITV, that’s what my feeling was.

Q: In the sort of BBC Scotland?

A: And I think it was covered in London as well, yes, whenever they came North, which is just occasionally until that last week when suddenly even the BBC in London woke up to the fact that, “Goodness me, this could go independence way,” and they sent everybody north in that last week.

Q: Yes. What were your feelings on the morning of the result?

A: Gosh, it caught me by surprise actually because I was manning a polling station in a No part of Edinburgh and there seemed to be an awful lot of ‘Yes’ votes rolling in. People were sort of putting up their thumbs to the SNP man standing beside them on the P side as it were. I thought, “Gosh, a lot of people are voting ‘Yes’, even in this part of town,” so I was fairly sure that the ‘Yes’ had won actually.

Q: Right.

A: So, I tuned in at ten o’clock and until 11, I still thought, “Yes, it seems they’re going to squeeze in,” and then I had to go to bed early because I was working the next morning and when I woke up the next morning at six and tuned in, the whole picture completely changed but meantime, people had been watching Glasgow voting ‘Yes’, Dundee voting ‘Yes’ so it was quite tempting to think, “Goodness me, it’s a ‘Yes’ result.” Also, I was very surprised by how much the ‘No’ campaign won, you know, by 10%. It was quite astonishing, I thought. I thought it would’ve been much narrower than that, and then I didn’t expect Salmond to resign either. I’d gone out to work and I’d came back in the evening to find that Alex Salmond had resigned. It was astonishing.

Q: Yes. Do you think he needed to do that?

A: No, he didn’t need to do it. I think it was a personal thing. I’m not quite sure what was behind it. I think it was a personal thing. I think he just had been the leader for ten years, he’d been First Minister for seven. That’s quite a go. I think he just maybe wanted a change, needed a change, and then he saw that this was perhaps a good junction at which to go and that Nicola Sturgeon would take over, you know, and then the vista opened out to him that perhaps he could lead the SNP at Westminster, especially with that tight election and that’s quite a tempting thing to do as well. The area’s been quite grey because Gordon is an SNP country, is a Liberal Democrats country. It’s held by the Liberal Democrats, so he’s got to win there to retain his credibility. I think he will but it’s still a bit of a risk.

Q: Yes, he’s not parachuting himself into a safe scene.

A: No, exactly, and he’s always done that. He’s always taken the risk.

Q: Do you think that’s a calculated risk because he has so much media presence that, you know, he knows that he can pull a swing of so many percent?

A: Maybe. I still think it’s quite courageous. I admire him for doing it.

Q: It’ll be interesting to see what happens.

A: Yes.

Q: Great. I think that’s everything actually.

A: Is that all you want to do?

Q: Yes.

**[Transcript Ends 00:33:35]**